

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

\$1.1 MILLION TO KICK-START MEDICAL LAB TECH PROGRAM

PRINCE GEORGE – Training in the north for the north is the goal of \$1.1 million in provincial start-up funding for a medical laboratory technologist program at the College of New Caledonia, Prince George MLAs Shirley Bond and Pat Bell announced today.

“Our government is expanding health education programs across the province to ensure students can train where they live, and go on to work close to home and provide the quality care the people in our region need,” said Bond, MLA for Prince George-Mount Robson. “With more than \$1.1 million to help with the costs of this program, Prince George will have 18 new graduates each year with the skills to provide vital services in our local labs.”

Presently, students from the north wishing to train as medical laboratory technicians must travel to Vancouver or out of province. The College of New Caledonia program will allow students to learn how to conduct complex tests on blood, body fluids and tissue to help diagnose and treat illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and genetic diseases closer to home.

“Medical laboratory technologists are an essential part of a health-care team, and we want to ensure north central B.C. has enough skilled workers to provide top-notch service at our labs, clinics and hospitals,” said Bell, MLA for Prince George North. “The skills of medical laboratory technologists can make the difference in life and death treatments, including the blood typing and blood compatibility tests needed for transfusions.”

“Our health-care system would shut down without medical laboratory technologists,” said Prince George Omineca MLA John Rustad. “This program is fantastic news that will help meet this critical need in the north and may one day be able to help support more advanced cancer care services in the north.”

The funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education supports renovations, equipment and start-up costs for the two-year diploma program at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George. The ministry is also providing funding for the ongoing delivery of the program.

“The med lab tech program is the latest example of how the College of New Caledonia is working with other regional agencies and the provincial government to ensure we are offering relevant training opportunities in the north and for the north,” College of New Caledonia interim president John Bowman said.

The college developed the medical laboratory technology program with help from community partners and the health sector. There are 18 seats available in the program starting in January 2008.

- 2 -

"B.C. colleges do an excellent job of partnering with their communities to create new and innovative programs that meet local needs," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "The ministry worked closely with the college to make this proposal a reality as part of our commitment to increasing the number of health professionals graduating from B.C.'s post-secondary institutions who will provide care throughout the province."

-30-

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